Disposition of Contraband or Evidence

206.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction regarding the proper handling and disposition of contraband and evidence to ensure that the chain of custody is maintained so that evidence is admissible in a court of law or disciplinary hearing.

206.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Thurston County Sheriff's Office to seize evidence and contraband in accordance with current constitutional and search-and-seizure law. Members of this office shall properly handle all contraband and evidence in order to maintain its admissibility. All contraband and evidence shall be handled in a safe manner and in a way that will maintain the chain of custody.

206.3 INITIAL SEIZURE OF EVIDENCE

Any staff member who first comes into possession of any potential evidence should retain such evidence in his/her possession until it is properly released to the investigating authority. or preserve any area where potential evidence exists until such time an investigating authority takes over. When handling evidence, staff should observe the following safety precautions:

(a) Unload any firearm located in the approved loading/unloading area outside of the facility. If it is a revolver, the cylinder should be left open. If it is a semi-automatic pistol, the magazine shall be removed and the slide locked back in an open position. The cartridges and/or magazines will be packaged separately and booked with the firearm.

(b) Sheath any knife or other stabbing instrument in its holster (if any), or attach (tape) stiff cardboard to completely cover the blade.

(c) Place needles, such as syringes, into a hard plastic container that cannot be punctured by the needle.

(d) If the contraband is a suspected "homebrew" alcoholic beverage, the handling corrections deputy shall clearly describe the contraband within their report and the remainder of the liquid will be carefully disposed of.

(e) Miscellaneous non-criminal contraband will be documented and properly destroyed with the approval of a supervisor.

206.4 EVIDENCE BOOKING PROCEDURE

All potential criminal evidence shall be placed in an evidence bag, sealed, and kept under the control of the reporting deputy or supervisor until such time as it can be turned over to the responding investigative authority. This will be done prior to the employee going off-duty unless otherwise approved by a supervisor. The above process should be documented, in detail within the reporting deputies' incident report.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2023/12/11, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by Thurston County Sheriff's Office

206.4.1 NARCOTICS AND DANGEROUS DRUGS

Any found suspected narcotics or dangerous drugs not being processed for formal criminal prosecution will be documented within a written incident report or memo. The suspected narcotic or dangerous drug will be placed in a sealed evidence bag with the report attached. With a supervisors permission, that packet will be placed in the evidence safe located in the Housing Sergeants file office and witnessed by at least one additional member.

The designated corrections evidence Lieutenant will periodically collect items from the evidence safe and process them for destruction through the headquarters evidence team. A supplemental to each report will be completed by the corrections evidence Lieutenant upon transfer for destruction.

206.4.2 EXCEPTIONAL HANDLING

Certain evidence items require a separate process. Bodily fluids, such as blood or semen stains, shall be air-dried prior to storage. Members will make every effort to not disturb this type of evidence and will securely preserve the item or location of such evidence until such time as a responding investigator can take control of the evidence.

206.4.3 RECORDING OF EVIDENCE OR PROPERTY

Evidence will not be stored within the correctional facility. All criminal evidence will be turned over to the responding investigator and processed by them in accordance with Sheriff's Office Policy.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2023/12/11, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by Thurston County Sheriff's Office